

## **Lewiston Downtown Building Use Survey**

**May 1993**

**Prepared by: Lewiston-Auburn Economic Growth Council**

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report represents the combined efforts of several people. Chris Williamson, an intern with the Lewiston-Auburn Economic Growth Council, was responsible for all data collection, interpretation, and analysis. Over the course of the last ten weeks, he has been a familiar sight on the streets of downtown Lewiston. Chris was also responsible for the concluding remarks and photographs used in this report.

Matthew Kenney, marketing officer for the Growth Council, designed and edited this report. He was responsible for layout and the generation of the tables and charts that appear in the report. He also set up spreadsheets for the data collected.

Susan Ricker, a clerk in the tax assessor's office at Lewiston City Hall, was instrumental in answering questions and providing information not included in property cards.

Lastly, a special thanks to the building owners and property managers in downtown Lewiston who were kind enough to share with the Growth Council information regarding their buildings.

June 1, 1993

Stephen A. Heavener

Executive Director

Lewiston-Auburn Economic Growth Council

## **1993 LEWISTON DOWNTOWN BUILDING USE SURVEY**

**PREPARED BY: LEWISTON-AUBURN ECONOMIC GROWTH COUNCIL**

### **I. BACKGROUND**

In early March of 1993, Steven Levesque, the City of Lewiston's development director, called on the Lewiston-Auburn Economic Growth Council to undertake a survey of building use in the city's downtown area. Although the project had not been budgeted and the Growth Council lacked the staffing resources to perform the work, a decision was made to pursue the project aggressively because of its importance to Lewiston's commitment to the further development of its downtown district as a viable area for businesses and local residents.

Drawing on savings incurred during 1992 and 1993 when the Growth Council eliminated one full-time position as part of an effort to reduce operational costs, we were able to allocate \$3,000 to conduct the survey and produce this report.

### **II. INTRODUCTION**

In March through May of 1993, building use was assessed in Lewiston's downtown area. The focus of the survey was to find out how much square footage was available at each property and to ascertain the occupancy rate.

Data for this report were taken from computer printouts and property cards on file at Lewiston City Hall. Property owners were then surveyed on the types of occupants and square footage (occupied and vacant) of their buildings. A windshield survey was also conducted to secure obvious information at the street level.

Collected information was later analyzed in a number of different ways to present an accurate description of the downtown area.

It can be noted that the downtown area has five distinct divisions: Lisbon Street, from Main to Chestnut streets; Lisbon Street, from Chestnut to Willow streets; Main Street,



from the Longley Bridge to Bates Street; Park Street, from Main to Willow streets; and all other streets including Canal, Lincoln, Ash, Chestnut, Bates, and Pine.

Building space was analyzed for its use (office, retail, residential, social club) and status (occupied or vacant). In the tables used in this report, square footage is reported for residential properties (and consequently, in total square footage figures), though vacancy and occupancy square footage and percentages in the tables do not reflect the status of residential space.

Retail use would include stores where one could purchase merchandise as well as those where services are performed, such as at a travel agency or driving school.

Office use refers to a space used by professionals, such as lawyers, accountants, realtors, and bankers.

Social club use includes establishments where membership is required and where the space serves as a general meeting place.

Residential use refers to apartment space.

Commercial buildings refer to those used for retail, office, or social club space. A building that has a mixed use of residential and at least one other use type is counted in the table as a commercial building. As noted above, however, residential square footage is not reflected in the commercial vacancy percentages.

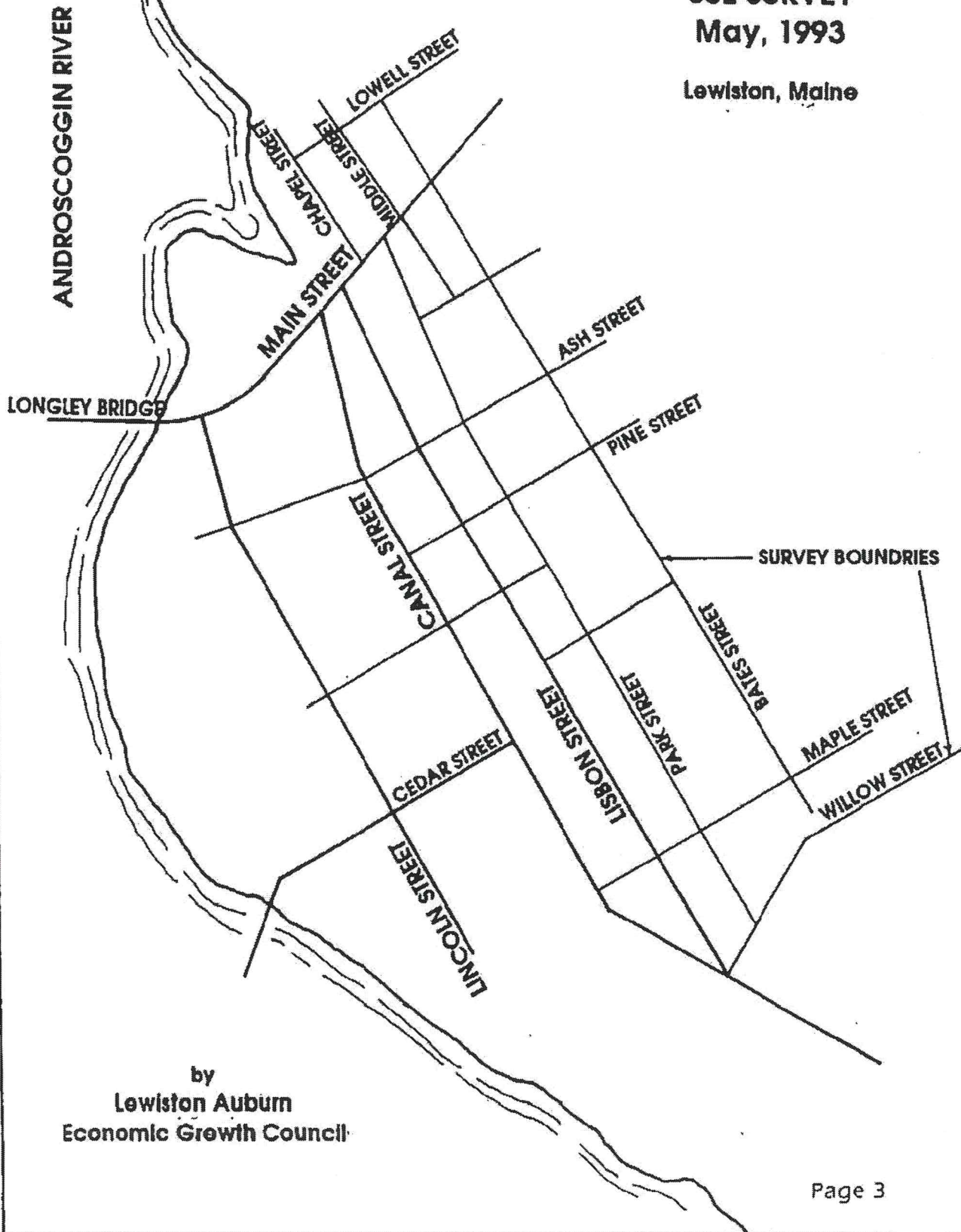
Vacant areas are those which have no occupants. Based on survey data gathered for office, retail, and social club building uses (but not residential), total vacant square footage was calculated for the different district divisions.

It should be noted that public properties such as the Lewiston City Building, Salvation Army, police station, schools, courthouse, and post office were not included in the survey. Mill space data were likewise excluded from this survey. Basement square footage and uses are not reported.

Results from the survey can be found on the following pages.

# DOWNTOWN LEWISTON USE SURVEY May, 1993

Lewiston, Maine



by  
Lewiston Auburn  
Economic Growth Council

## LEWISTON DOWNTOWN: CUMULATIVE RESULTS

	No.	%
Commercial buildings:	174	100%
Buildings 100% occupied:	92	53%
Buildings 100% vacant:	20	11%
Vacant commerical space*:		
First floor:		20%
Upper floors:		38%

Total retail space: ..... 634,958 s.f.

Total vacant retail space: ..... 168,701 s.f.

Retail space vacant: ..... 27%

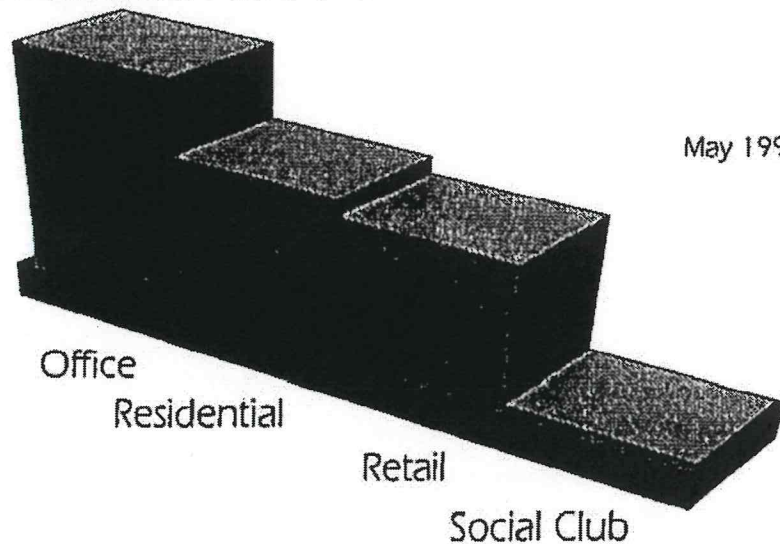
Total office space: ..... 958,931 s.f.

Total vacant office space: ..... 307,021 s.f.

Office space vacant: ..... 32%

Number of retail businesses: ..... 107

TYPES OF SPACE	s.f.	%
Total:.....	2,378,412	100%
Office:.....	958,931	40%
Residential: .....	736,569	31%
Retail:.....	634,958	27%
Social Club: .....	47,954	2%



\*Vacant commercial square footage is spread throughout office, retail, and social club space types. The same holds true for the other tables in this report.



## LISBON STREET: MAIN TO WILLOW STREETS

	No.	%
Commercial buildings:	100	100%
Buildings 100% occupied:	46	46%
Buildings 100% vacant:	14	14%
Vacant commerical space*:		
First floor:		25%
Upper floors:		50%

Total retail space: ..... 378,320 s.f.

Total vacant retail space: ..... 133,727 s.f.

Retail space vacant: ..... 35%

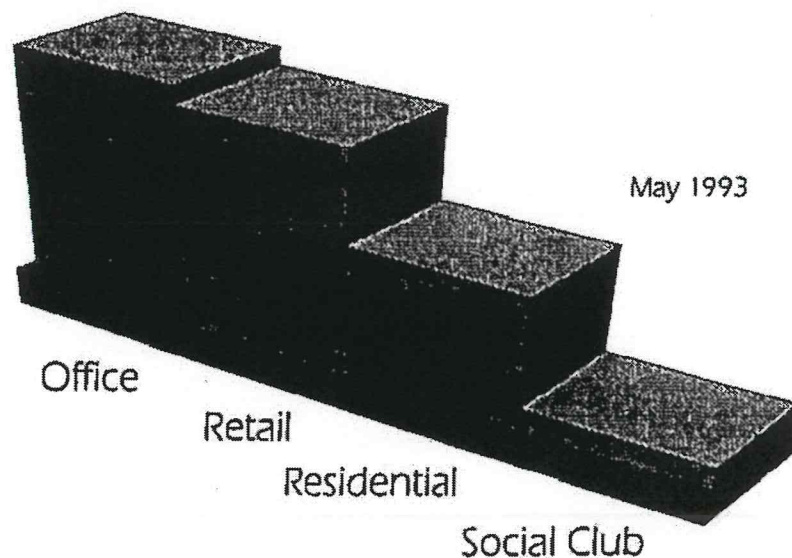
Total office space: ..... 408,340 s.f.

Total vacant office space: ..... 177,724 s.f.

Office space vacant: ..... 44%

Number of retail businesses: ..... 64

TYPES OF SPACE	s.f.	%
Total:.....	1,043,778	100%
Office:.....	408,340	39%
Residential: .....	219,514	21%
Retail:.....	378,320	36%
Social Club: .....	37,604	4%



## LISBON STREET: MAIN TO CHESTNUT STREETS

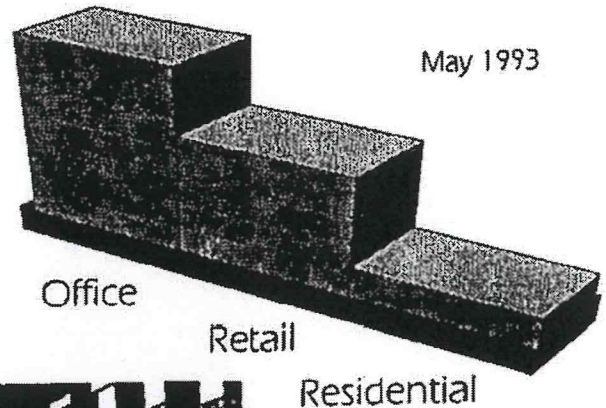
	No.	%
Commercial buildings:	60	100%
Buildings 100% occupied:	22	37%
Buildings 100% vacant:	8	13%
Vacant commercial space*:		
First floor:		28%
Upper floors:		52%

Total retail space: ..... 246,689 s.f.  
 Total vacant retail space: ..... 103,724 s.f.  
 Retail space vacant: ..... 42%

Total office space: ..... 336,138 s.f.  
 Total vacant office space: ..... 140,018 s.f.  
 Office space vacant: ..... 42%

Number of retail businesses: ..... 46

TYPES OF SPACE	s.f.	%
Total: .....	655,293	100%
Office: .....	336,138	51%
Residential: .....	72,466	11%
Retail: .....	246,689	38%





## LISBON STREET: CHESTNUT TO WILLOW STREETS

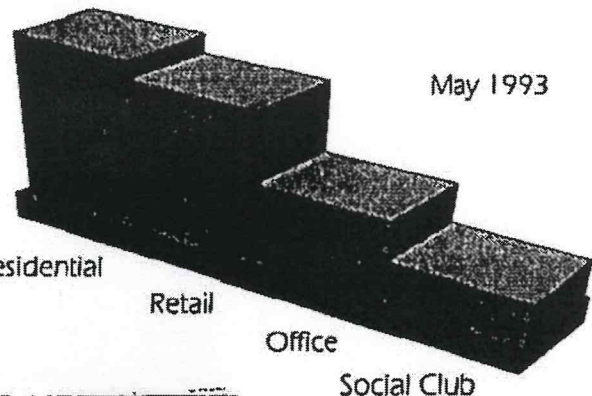
	No.	%
Commercial buildings:	40	100%
Buildings 100% occupied:	24	60%
Buildings 100% vacant:	6	15%
Vacant commerical space*:		
First floor:		19%
Upper floors:		43%

Total retail space: ..... 131,631 s.f.  
 Total vacant retail space: ..... 30,003 s.f.  
 Retail space vacant: ..... 23%

Total office space: ..... 72,202 s.f.  
 Total vacant office space: ..... 37,706 s.f.  
 Office space vacant: ..... 52%

Number of retail businesses: ..... 18

TYPES OF SPACE	s.f.	%
Total: .....	388,485	100%
Office: .....	72,202	19%
Residential: .....	147,048	38%
Retail: .....	131,631	34%
Social Club: .....	37,604	10%



# **MAIN STREET: LONGLEY BRIDGE TO BATES STREET**

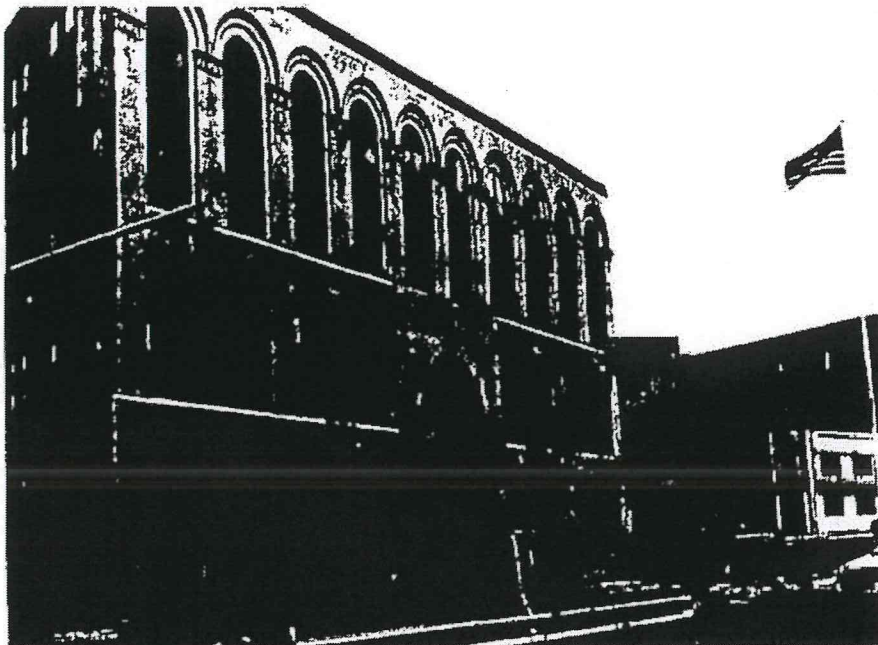
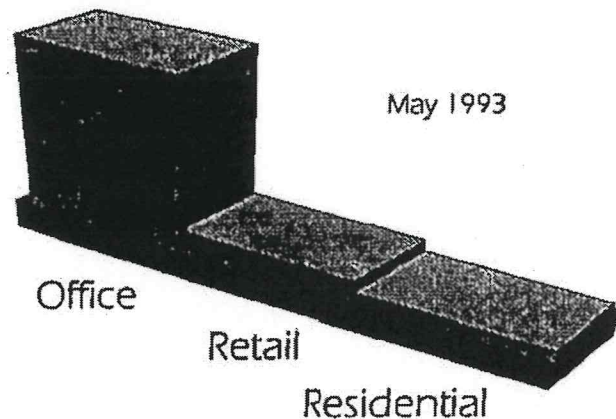
	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
Commercial buildings:	16	100%
Buildings 100% occupied:	11	69%
Buildings 100% vacant:	0	0%
Vacant commerical space*:		
First floor:		33%
Upper floors:		16%

Total retail space: ..... 29,523 s.f.  
 Total vacant retail space: ..... 5,470 s.f.  
 Retail space vacant: ..... 19%

Total office space: ..... 197,573 s.f.  
 Total vacant office space: ..... 45,876 s.f.  
 Office space vacant: ..... 23%

Number of retail businesses: ..... 10

<b>TYPES OF SPACE</b>	<b>s.f.</b>	<b>%</b>
Total: .....	243,744	100%
Office: .....	197,573	81%
Residential: .....	16,648	7%
Retail: .....	29,523	12%





## PARK STREET: MAIN TO WILLOW STREETS

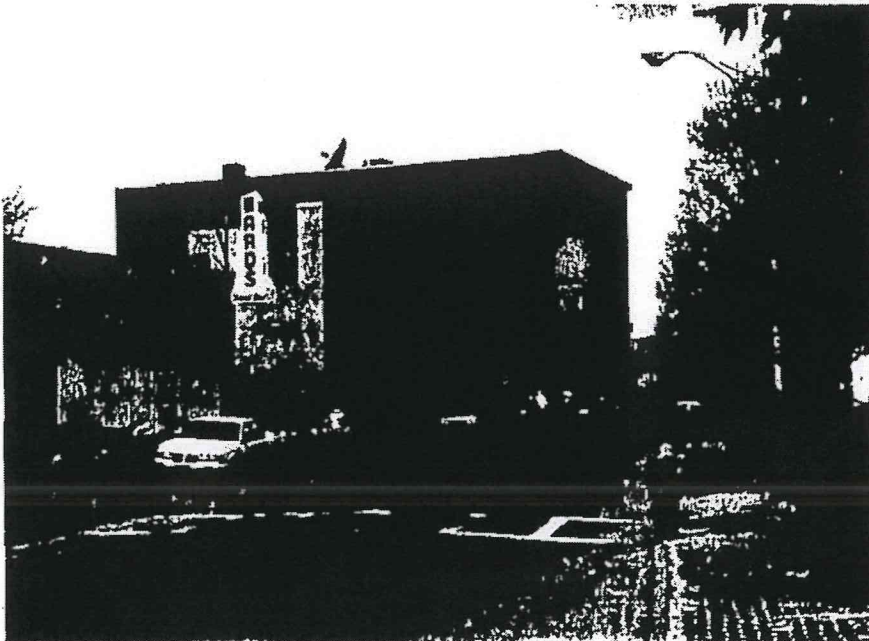
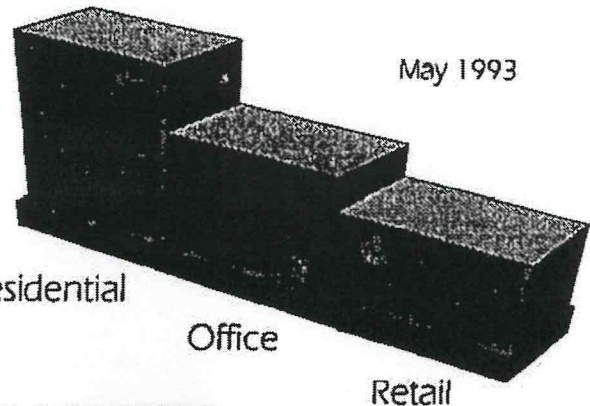
	No.	%
Commercial buildings:	10	100%
Buildings 100% occupied:	4	40%
Buildings 100% vacant:	3	30%
Vacant commerical space*:		
First floor:		29%
Upper floors:		45%

TYPES OF SPACE	s.f.	%
Total: .....	253,878	100%
Office: .....	78,568	31%
Residential: .....	117,625	46%
Retail: .....	57,685	23%

Total retail space: ..... 57,685 s.f.  
 Total vacant retail space: ..... 29,504 s.f.  
 Retail space vacant: ..... 51%

Total office space: ..... 78,568 s.f.  
 Total vacant office space: ..... 19,434 s.f.  
 Office space vacant: ..... 25%

Number of retail businesses: ..... 4





## CANAL STREET: MAIN TO WILLOW STREETS

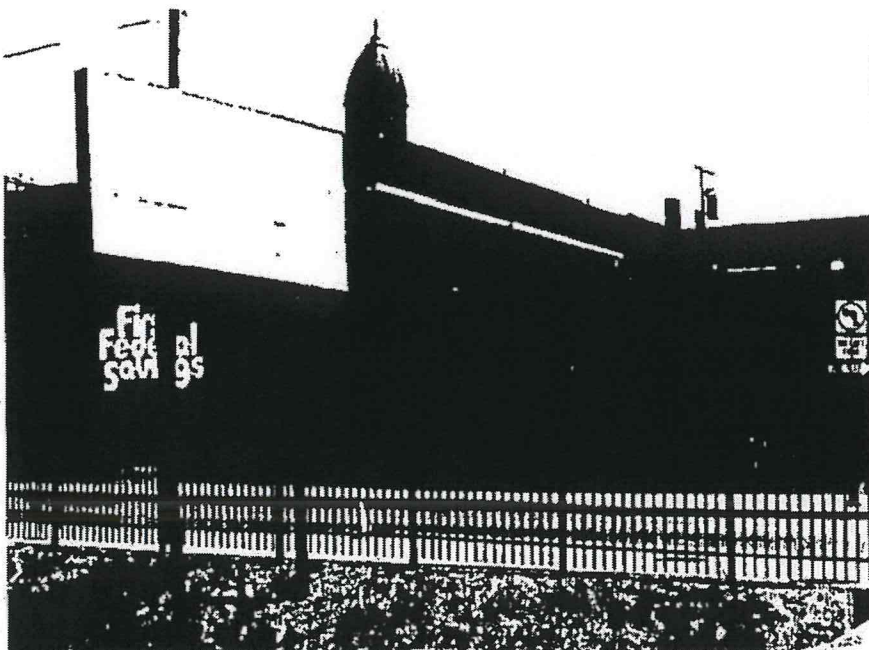
	No.	%
Commercial buildings:	10	100%
Buildings 100% occupied:	9	90%
Buildings 100% vacant:	1	10%
Vacant commerical space*:		
First floor:		9%
Upper floors:		0%

TYPES OF SPACE	s.f.	%
Total: .....	75,949	100%
Office: .....	50,836	67%
Residential: .....	14,000	18%
Retail: .....	11,113	15%

Total retail space: ..... 11,113 s.f.  
 Total vacant retail space: ..... 0 s.f.  
 Retail space vacant: ..... 0%

Total office space: ..... 50,836 s.f.  
 Total vacant office space: ..... 4,968 s.f.  
 Office space vacant: ..... 10%

Number of retail businesses: ..... 6



## ASH & PINE STREETS: CANAL TO BATES STREETS

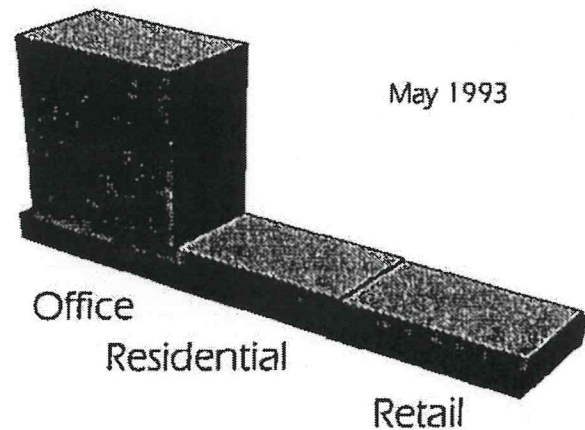
	No.	%
Commercial buildings:	6	100%
Buildings 100% occupied:	4	67%
Buildings 100% vacant:	0	0%
Vacant commerical space*:		
First floor:		0%
Upper floors:		21%

Total retail space: ..... 8,103 s.f.  
 Total vacant retail space: ..... 0 s.f.  
 Retail space vacant: ..... 0%

Total office space: ..... 115,791 s.f.  
 Total vacant office space: ..... 17,283 s.f.  
 Office space vacant: ..... 15%

Number of retail businesses: ..... 1

TYPES OF SPACE	s.f.	%
Total: .....	133,785	100%
Office: .....	115,791	87%
Residential: .....	9,891	7%
Retail: .....	8,103	6%



## BATES, LINCOLN, CHESTNUT AND OTHER SIDE STREETS

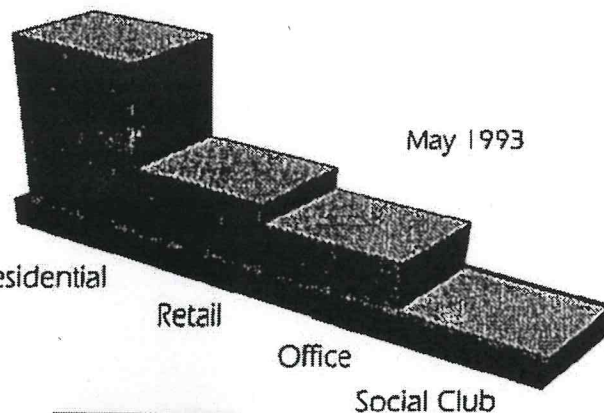
	No.	%
Commercial buildings:	32	100%
Buildings 100% occupied:	18	56%
Buildings 100% vacant:	2	6%
Vacant commerical space*:		
First floor:		7%
Upper floors:		29%

Total retail space: ..... 150,214 s.f.  
 Total vacant retail space: ..... 0 s.f.  
 Retail space vacant: ..... 0%

Total office space: ..... 107,823 s.f.  
 Total vacant office space: ..... 41,736 s.f.  
 Office space vacant: ..... 39%

Number of retail businesses: ..... 22

TYPES OF SPACE	s.f.	%
Total:.....	627,278	100%
Office:.....	107,823	17%
Residential:.....	358,891	57%
Retail:.....	150,214	24%
Social Club .....	10,350	2%





## CONCLUSION

With ample office and retail space to meet the needs of professionals and retailers alike, downtown Lewiston has great potential. Most of the buildings are in good condition. Still, some buildings need extensive renovations, while others could use minor face-lifts and cleanup. In certain isolated cases, demolition work may also need to be done. The area has evolved from retail to office and service uses. Today, lawyers, bankers, realtors, and other business people make up the majority of occupants. In order to revitalize the downtown and fill the vacant space, two factors must be addressed: image and transformation.

In conducting this survey, I found working on Lisbon Street to be a pleasant and rewarding experience. People were interested in my work and frequently asked questions. Professionals and their clients indicated that they feel safe walking to and from their cars. Trees and benches make the walk pleasant for pedestrians.

Keeping the sidewalks clean of debris and trash contributes to civic pride. I observed workers sweeping sand on Park Street in front of Victor News and the Courthouse. This high traffic area must be kept clean as it serves as a major artery to the downtown area. The walkways connecting Lisbon Street to Park Street were also free of debris.

The "Cities of the Androscoggin" community-image campaign has emerged as a powerful vehicle in re-shaping how the Twin Cities is viewed by those who live here and by Mainers from across the state. Promotional pieces on 6 Alive! WCSH-TV at prime hours near newscasts reach thousands of people and deliver a positive message that needs to be seen and heard.

Activities such as the Maine State Parade are also excellent for enhancing Lewiston-Auburn's image. Events in Kennedy Park could also help bolster a stronger image.

Once a positive image has been established and marketed, the second phase of revitalization can begin.

The transformation from retail to office use will not be easy. Some buildings will require renovation. For example, the former Ward Brothers store at 49 Park Street (72 Lisbon Street) symbolizes the downtown's plight. The interior walls need complete renovation, as does the roof. Some cosmetic changes will also be required. However, the

positives far outweigh the negatives in that this building is centrally located in the downtown area. Banks and law offices are within walking distance of the property, and off-street parking is available in the municipal lot on the Park Street side. The former store would be a fitting site for a restaurant or a discount movie theater (somewhat like the Nickelodeon in Portland). It could also be converted into office space.

Incentives could attract future clients to the area. Offering free rent for the first six months or splitting the cost of utilities would make vacant space more attractive. Building owners could help pay for the cost of renovation and improvements. This coupled with backing from City Hall could spark a recovery.

In this transformation from retail to office use, one cannot disregard the presence of retail businesses that are currently faring quite well in the downtown area.

Victor News is successful because it caters to the type of clients who live and work in the area. Senior citizens from Oak Street and Chestnut Place can walk to the store in a matter of minutes. McCrory's, on the other hand, is doing a brisk businesses because it fills the niche of a discount price store.

In conclusion, the downtown district needs to shed what is, in my opinion, an unwarranted negative image. Secondly, the transformation from retail use to office use will not come without some effort and initiative from business leaders and owners alike.

The downtown area has potential. Still, it cannot compete with the Auburn Mall and Wal-Mart. The downtown must be marketed as a clean, safe, enjoyable, place in which to live, work, and do business. It is hoped that this downtown building use survey will be instrumental in efforts to save and revitalize Lewiston's downtown district. The vacant office space is not half empty, but half full and waiting for the next occupants. Most people would agree that something not being used to its potential is not only a waste, but, more importantly, a misuse.

Chris Williamson  
May 1993